RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES

Societies with a religious purpose have been one of the most interesting features of Chinese life. Often they have been secret—partly because proscribed by the state—and many have had a political or social objective in addition to their religious purpose. Some have been very widespread and powerful and have even broken out into violent uprisings. They are often syncretic, combining Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian, and, occasionally of late years, Christian elements. Some of them have insisted upon a high standard of morality for their members and often those in which Buddhism predominates have required vegetarianism and have been the expression of an earnest religious quest. Among the many societies have been the *Pailien Chiao,* or White Lotus (or Lily) Society, which incorporated religious elements but was primarily political and repeatedly gave rise to rebellions; the *Tsai-li Chiao,* which forbade to its members opium, wine, and tobacco, but not meat, and which took over many Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian features, but was also suspected of being the *Patlien Chiao* under another name; the *Hsien-t'ien Chiao,* or Preceding Heaven Society, which discouraged ancestor worship and idolatry, exacted of its members a pledge to keep the five commandments of Buddhism, including that against the taking of life, and met in small groups for the reading or recitation of Buddhist texts; the *Chin-tan Chiao* [9] which made much of universal love and the immortality of the soul; and the *Shen Chiao,* also called the *Wu Chiao*[3] or Sect of the Magicians, which sought to expel *kuei* and to perform acts of magic. Some of them have

endured for centuries and others have had a very short existence. The last thirty years have seen a good many founded, flourish for a time, and then wane. Among these have been the *Tao Yuan,* for the cultivation of the inner life, the receiving of messages through the planchette, and philanthropic activities, and the *Tao-te-hsueh She* which sought to unify all religions, revered the God of All Religions, and met weekly for worship and lectures.

MOHAMMEDANISM

Outside the main stream of Chinese religious life, forming separate religious communities, are the Moslems. In previous chapters we have seen something of the history of Islam in China—